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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000235

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO PDAS WARLICK  
P FOR DRUSSELL AND RRANGASWAMY  
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER  
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [UNSC](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AE](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: DEFMIN MURR SIGNS LETTERS OF AGREEMENT  
FOR U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE, ASKS FOR HELP ON UAE MILITARY  
AID

REF: BEIRUT 1780

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Defense Minister Elias Murr told the Ambassador in a February 26 meeting that he had signed all seven pending Letters of Agreement needed to ensure the timely delivery of several items of U.S. military assistance before the June 7 parliamentary elections. Murr expressed appreciation for continuing U.S. military assistance and training, stressing its contribution to the GOL's counter terrorism efforts, but also underlined the importance of receiving two Caravan aircraft instead of one.

12. (C) Recounting his February 21-25 trip to the UAE, Murr told the Ambassador that the UAE had "committed" (but not yet provided) \$17 million for ten M60 tanks slated for delivery to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and had not yet committed to finance the remaining 56 tanks. The UAE planned to deliver ten PUMA helicopters to Lebanon, Murr said. As a means of "turning off" the Russian MiG-29 offer, Lebanon would also receive ten Hawk fixed wing aircraft from the UAE, obviating the need for the Russian fighter aircraft, Murr said -- although no timeframe was specified.

13. (C) Describing his recent trip to Cairo as positive, Murr claimed Hizballah SYG Hassan Nasrallah's recent attacks against the Egyptian army undermined Nasrallah's popularity among the Egyptians. The electoral alliance between his father, MP Michel Murr, and Amine Gemayel's Kataeb, weakened Free Patriotic Movement leader and Hizballah ally Michel Aoun's popularity in the Metn district, Murr argued. He expressed confidence that the GOL would press criminal charges against the four generals held in connection with former PM Rafiq Hariri's assassination, speculating that the generals would be transferred after March 1 to The Hague and then released. End summary.

UAE ASSISTANCE TO LAF;  
WILL TURN OFF RUSSIAN MiG-29S  
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14. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by PolOff, met Defense

Minister Elias Murr at his home in Rabieh on February 26. After discussing ongoing U.S.-Lebanese cooperation on counter terrorism, Murr, who had just returned from a second trip to the UAE (after accompanying President Michel Sleiman to Abu Dhabi two weeks ago), reported that he met Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Mohammed bin Zayed, Interior Minister Saif bin Zayed, National Security Advisor Hazza bin Zayed, and Foreign Minister Abdallah bin Zayed.

15. (C) Noting that the UAE had indeed committed \$17 million to cover the first ten M60 tanks for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), Murr asked if the U.S. could help by urging the Emiratis to transfer the money promptly. He said he had not yet received a commitment for the second allotment of money (\$98 million) for the remaining 56 tanks. (Comment: It is unclear as to whether either Murr or President Sleiman had made a direct request for this second allotment. End comment.)

16. (C) Murr estimated that the UAE would deliver ten PUMA helicopters, worth \$150 million, in two months time. He reported the UAE planned to send a military liaison to its embassy in Lebanon to coordinate the delivery process. According to Murr, eight pilots have already been trained to fly PUMAs, and have commenced refresher training.

17. (C) Murr disclosed that the Russian ambassador had recently inquired when Lebanon would send officers to Russia to receive training on the MiG-29 fighter aircraft (reftel). Murr claimed that he had stalled in responding. Murr

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stressed that he wants the Russian offer to "disappear" before moving forward with receiving Hawk fixed wing aircraft from the UAE, and therefore had not raised the Hawks deal in his last trip to the UAE. He explained that the UAE had previously committed to delivering ten Hawk fixed wing aircraft (out of the 30 it plans to retire in the coming months).

18. (C) He added that eight Hawk pilots had received training in the UAE, four of whom are instructor pilots. Murr planned to use these aircraft as he would use helicopters (for close air support), saying they are equipped with 20mm canons, air-to-ground missiles, and will work well in fighting terrorists, particularly in the Palestinian camps. To pursue the deal, Murr suggested he would return to the UAE for negotiation when the Hawks are ready. At that point, he said, he would officially announce the arrangement, obviating Lebanon's need for the MiG-29s.

STATUS OF U.S ASSISTANCE TO LAF

19. (C) The Ambassador reported on MARCENT LTG Helland's visit to Beirut the day before. As part of the five-year military assistance plan formed jointly with the U.S., the Commander of Marine Forces Central had visited LAF headquarters the previous day to begin discussions on training special operations personnel of the LAF (to begin after the June elections). Murr underlined the importance of receiving two Caravan aircraft from the U.S., arguing that if one were in maintenance, the LAF would be vulnerable to "another Nahr al-Barid" if it only had one Caravan.

110. (C) Murr told the Ambassador he had signed all of the Letters of Agreement earlier in the week that will permit the delivery of key items of U.S. military assistance. The Ambassador noted that his action will ensure the receipt of the following by May before the parliamentary elections, via a consolidated shipment: 41 M198 Howitzers, at least ten Hellfire missiles, 20K rounds of 40mm ammunition, 5K rounds of 105mm ammunition, 46K propelling charges, 10K primers, 250 M249 machine guns, 24 extra barrels, 150 12 gauge riot shotguns, 1500 laser sights, five grenade launcher barrels,

four containers from DLS, 102 MK 82 bombs, 72 MK83 bombs, and 12 Zodiac boats. Murr was very appreciative of this news.

EGYPTIANS ANGRY AT NASRALLAH  
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¶11. (C) Relaying that his recent trip to Egypt was "good," Murr said he spent over two hours with President Hosni Mubarak and also met with head of Egyptian intelligence Omar Suleiman. Murr said that when Hizballah SYG Hassan Nasrallah insulted the Egyptian army, it shifted the Egyptians' admiration for the resistance leader into hatred.

IF SPECIAL TRIBUNAL RELEASES THE GENERALS,  
GOL READY TO PRESS CRIMINAL CHARGES  
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¶12. (C) According to Murr, Mubarak reportedly was "confident" UNIIIC Commissioner and soon-to-be Special Tribunal (STL) Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare would indict suspects before Lebanon's parliamentary elections in June. Murr said he expected the STL to release the four generals, currently in Lebanese custody in connection with former PM Rafiq Hariri's assassination, once they are transferred to The Hague. "The second they are released from The Hague," Murr assured the Ambassador, "the GOL will press criminal charges against them." Apart from that, Murr said that, at a minimum, if Syrian officers were indicted, "this will be great for Lebanon."

HIZBALLAH, KATYOUSHAS  
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¶13. (C) Claiming he was behind his father MP Michel Murr's electoral alliance with Amine Gemayel's Kataeb in the Metn

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district, Murr relayed that his father had instructed Gemayel to operate under the theme of "How to beat Aoun," instead of focusing on how many deputies each party is allocated. Murr said that his father conditioned his deal on Gemayel's agreement to this approach.

¶14. (C) "Hizballah is nervous," Murr quipped, explaining that his father's alliance weakens Aoun in Metn. He added that he suspected Palestinians, urged on by Hizballah, were behind the Katyusha rockets discovered by the LAF the previous day in the Nabaa al Jaouz area in Shebaa (which were not prepared to be launched). LAF and UNIFIL patrols had been checking properties for ordinances along the coastal road between Naqoura and Tyre since February 23. Murr praised the teamwork between the LAF and UNIFIL in their continuing search for additional rockets.

¶15. (C) Finally, Murr also indicated his interest in staying on as Defense Minister in the new government, explaining that he is committed to carrying out the five-year military assistance plan developed with CENTCOM and that he has UN Security Council Resolution 1701 responsibilities to implement in southern Lebanon.

SISON